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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5945  
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RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE  
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [KPKO](#) [PO](#) [CG](#)  
SUBJECT: BEMBA LEAVES KINSHASA FOR PORTUGAL

REF: A. KINSHASA 353

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 375

[1](#)1. (U) Senator and former Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba departed Kinshasa for Portugal aboard his private jet at 2:10 a.m. April 11. Bemba, accompanied by his wife and five children, officially left for follow-up surgery for a broken leg suffered in December 2006. He had been at a South African embassy compound since March 22 during fighting between his guard forces and the Congolese military (ref A).

[1](#)2. (SBU) Arrangements for Bemba's departure were finalized after the provisional president of the Senate, Mbueshi Kuongo Mulendu, signed a letter to Portuguese authorities April 10 authorizing him to leave the country for 60 days for medical care. Bemba also signed a letter last week promising not to engage in any political activities while in Portugal.

[1](#)3. (U) MONUC peacekeepers provided a security escort for Bemba and his family en route to Kinshasa's N'Djili airport. No incidents occurred following Bemba's departure, and the downtown Gombe district was open for business as usual the morning of April 11, as were all other parts of Kinshasa.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Some media reports claimed the GDRC allowed Bemba to leave after lifting an arrest warrant against him. In fact, as reported ref B, no warrant ever was issued.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Comment: There is already a great deal of speculation about Bemba's future, most of it premature and ill-informed. What is clear, however, is that Bemba's MLC party now has the potential to emerge from the former vice president's very large shadow. It is hoped party leaders will seize the opportunity to play an active role as part of a constructive and loyal opposition. End comment.

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